



**KENTUCKY BOARD OF NURSING**  
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**ADVISORY OPINION STATEMENT**

**ROLES OF NURSES IN ENDOSCOPIC PROCEDURES**

The Kentucky Board of Nursing is authorized by Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) Chapter 314 to regulate nurses, nursing education and practice, promulgate regulations and to issue advisory opinions on nursing practice, in order to assure that safe and effective nursing care is provided by nurses to the citizens of the Commonwealth.

The Kentucky Board of Nursing issues advisory opinions as to what constitutes safe nursing practice. As such, an opinion is not a regulation of the Board and does not have the force and effect of law. It is issued as a guideline to licensees who wish to engage in safe nursing practice.

**Opinion:** Roles of Nurses and Unlicensed Personnel in Endoscopic Procedures

**Approved Date:** 6/1992

**Revised:** 12/1993; 2/2005; 2/2019

**Editorial Revision:** 1/2011; 5/2012;  
6/2015; 5/2018

**Reviewed:** 1/2011

**Accountability and Responsibility of Nurses**

In accordance with KRS 314.021(2), nurses are responsible and accountable for making decisions that are based upon the individuals' educational preparation and current clinical competence in nursing, and requires licensees to practice nursing with reasonable skill and safety. Nursing practice should be consistent with the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*, established standards of practice, and be evidence based.

**Rationale for Advisory Opinion**

In response to multiple inquiries on the utilization, role and scope of practice of nurses in the performance of diagnostic and therapeutic endoscopic procedures, the Kentucky Board of Nursing issued this advisory opinion statement.

## Advisory Opinion

### **Responsibility and Accountability of Nurses**

KRS 314.021(2) imposes individual responsibility upon a nurse to undertake the performance of acts for which the nurse is educationally prepared and clinically competent to perform in a safe, effective manner. This section holds nurses individually responsible and accountable for rendering safe effective nursing care to clients and for judgments exercised and actions taken in the course of providing care.

The responsibilities which any nurse can safely accept are determined by the variables in each nursing practice setting. These variables include:

- A. The nurse's own qualifications including basic prelicensure educational preparation; knowledge and skills subsequently acquired through continuing education and practice; and current clinical competence.
- B. The "standard of care" which would be provided in similar circumstances by reasonable and prudent nurses who have similar training and experience.
- C. The complexity and frequency of nursing care needed by a given client population, the qualifications of available staff, and the accessibility of needed resources.
- D. Established policies, procedures, standards of practice, and channels of communication which are consistent with laws governing nursing practice.

Nursing practice should be consistent with the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*, established standards of practice, and be evidence based.

## **1. Licensed Practical Nurse Scope of Practice**

It is within the scope of licensed practical nursing practice for the licensed practical nurse qualified by education, experience, and current clinical competence, and under the direction and supervision of a physician, APRN, or registered nurse, to perform acts including but not limited to the following:

- A. Participate in the assessment, planning, intervention and evaluation of nursing care of patients undergoing endoscopic procedures.
- B. Provide nursing care for a patient undergoing endoscopy procedures when the patient's condition is predictable and stable including the administration of IV medications in accordance with 201 KAR 20:490 Licensed Practical Nurse Infusion Therapy Scope of Practice <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/201/020/490.pdf>.
- C. Determine which nursing acts in the implementation of care can be delegated and to whom in accordance with 201 KAR 20:400 Delegation of nursing tasks <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/201/020/400.pdf>
- D. Perform technical endoscopist assistance tasks as described in Section 3 of this statement.

## **2. Registered Nurse Scope of Practice**

It is within the scope of registered nursing practice for a registered nurse, qualified by education, experience, and current clinical competence, to perform acts including but not limited to the following:

- A. Utilize substantial, specialized nursing knowledge, judgment and skill in providing complex nursing acts to meet the patients' needs, including the ongoing assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of nursing care for patients undergoing endoscopic procedures.

- B. Plan and direct the nursing care of patients undergoing endoscopy procedures, including clinical decision-making regarding nursing care, and assuring that care is provided in a safe and competent manner.
- C. Administer medications via a direct intravenous route, i.e., push, bolus, or via a central line access device with a valid authorized provider order.
- D. Implement emergency nursing procedures for intervention in complications.
- E. Determine which nursing acts in the implementation of care can be delegated and to whom in accordance with 201 KAR 20:400 Delegation of nursing tasks  
<http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/201/020/400.pdf>
- F. Provide endoscopic assistance, as described in Section 3 of this statement.

Further, the Board agrees with and endorses the Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates position statement “**Statement on the Use of Sedation and Analgesia in the Gastrointestinal Endoscopy Setting**” which states in part:

“Because of the importance of managing the patient who is receiving sedation and analgesia, a second nurse or associate is required to assist the physician with those procedures that are complicated either by the severity of the patient’s illness and/or the complex technical requirements associated with advanced diagnostic and therapeutic procedures (ASGE, 2008; SGNA, 2017).”  
[https://www.sgna.org/Portals/0/Practice/Sedation/Sedation\\_FINAL.pdf?ver=2017-10-09-110940-983](https://www.sgna.org/Portals/0/Practice/Sedation/Sedation_FINAL.pdf?ver=2017-10-09-110940-983)

### **Flexible Sigmoidoscopies**

The Board issued the following opinion:

- It is within the scope of registered nursing practice for a registered nurse, qualified by the necessary education and experience, to perform flexible sigmoidoscopies for colorectal cancer screening.
- Registered nurses should perform this procedure based upon an order of a physician or qualified provider and according to appropriately established written policies and procedures, which are consistent with the *Kentucky Nursing Laws*.
- Registered nurses who perform flexible sigmoidoscopies for the purpose of colorectal cancer screening are responsible for having the substantial specialized knowledge and skill to perform this procedure and should have documented evidence of completion of continuing education which provides for clinical practice and demonstrated competency in the performance of the procedure.
- Development of educational programming for registered nurses in the performance of flexible sigmoidoscopies should be based upon the cognitive and technical skills identified in the guideline entitled “Performance of the Flexible Sigmoidoscopy by Registered Nurses for the Purpose of Colorectal Cancer Screening,” Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates (2009) <https://www.sgna.org/Portals/0/Education/PDF/Standards-Guidelines/FlexibleSigmoidoscopyGuideline.pdf>.
- Registered nurses should maintain documentation of current clinical competency in the performance of the procedures. Further, the Board advises that qualified health care providers should be available for assistance in the event of complications associated with the performance of the procedure.

### **3. Endoscopist Assistance<sup>1</sup> By Nurses**

<sup>1</sup> Endoscopist assistance acts may include but are not limited to: injection of dye/contrast media; injection of sclerotherapy agents; and manipulation of polypectomy snare/bowie, sphinctertone/papillatome, or endoscope.

It is within the scope of nursing practice for a registered nurse or licensed practical nurse who possesses appropriate knowledge and technical skill to assist the endoscopist during the performance of endoscopic procedures and to perform select acts under the continuous, direct, and on-site supervision and direction of the endoscopist performing the procedure.

**In no event should the nurse be expected to replace or assume the responsibilities of the endoscopist performing the procedure.**

Nurses who provide endoscopist assistance should follow documented procedures agreed upon by the medical and nursing staff and formally adopted by the facility. The nurse should maintain documentation of their educational preparation which provides for clinical practice and demonstration of competency in the performance of acts.

### **Decisions Related to Delegation**

A registered nurse who makes decisions related to delegation of tasks is governed by 201 KAR 20:400 Delegation of nursing tasks. (An informational copy of the regulation may be downloaded from the KBN website at <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/201/020/400.pdf>. In addition to this advisory opinion the Kentucky Board of Nursing has published the Decision Tree for Delegation to Unlicensed Assistive Personnel which provides guidance to the nurse in determining whether a selected act should be delegated (An informational copy of the decision tree may be downloaded from the KBN website at <https://kbn.ky.gov/practice/Documents/DecisionTreeforDelegationtoUAP.pdf>

In summary, delegation should occur only if, in the professional opinion of the delegating nurse, the act may be competently and safely performed by the person to whom the act is delegated.

### **Determining Scope of Practice**

KRS 314.021(2) holds all nurses individually responsible and accountable for the individual's acts based upon the nurse's education and experience. Each nurse must exercise professional and prudent judgment in determining whether the performance of a given act is within the scope of practice for which the nurse is both licensed and clinically competent to perform. In addition to this advisory opinion statement, the Kentucky Board of Nursing has issued Advisory Opinion Statement #41 RN/LPN Scope of Practice Determination Guidelines which contains the KBN Decision-Making Model providing guidance to nurses in determining whether a selected act is within an individual nurse's scope of practice now or in the future. A copy of the KBN Decision-Making Model for Determining Scope of Practice for RNs/LPNs may be downloaded from the Board's website <https://kbn.ky.gov/practice/Documents/41%20KBN%20Decision-Making%20Model%20for%20Determining%20Scope%20of%20Practice%20for%20RNs-LPNs.pdf>.

The above is an opinion of the Kentucky Board of Nursing. The Kentucky Board of Nursing issues advisory opinions as to what constitutes safe nursing practice. An opinion is not a regulation of the Board and does not have the force and effect of law. It is issued as a guideline to licensees who wish to engage in safe nursing practice and who wish to minimize the possibility of being subjected to malpractice litigation.

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**Applicable Statutes From the Kentucky Nursing Laws<sup>2</sup>**

KRS 314.021(2) holds all nurses responsible and accountable for making decisions that are based upon the individuals' educational preparation and experience in nursing.

KRS 314.011(6) defines "registered nursing practice" as:

...The performance of acts requiring substantial specialized knowledge, judgment, and nursing skill based upon the principles of psychological, biological, physical, and social sciences in the application of the nursing process in:

- a) The care, counsel, and health teaching of the ill, injured or infirm.
- b) The maintenance of health or prevention of illness of others.
- c) The administration of medication and treatment as prescribed by a physician, physician assistant, dentist, or advanced practice registered nurse and as further authorized or limited by the board, and which are consistent either with American Nurses' Association Scope and Standards of Practice or with standards of practice established by nationally accepted organizations of registered nurses. Components of medication administration include, but are not limited to:
  1. Preparing and giving medication in the prescribed dosage, route, and frequency, including dispensing medications only as defined in subsection (17)(b) of this section;
  2. Observing, recording, and reporting desired effects, untoward reactions, and side effects of drug therapy;
  3. Intervening when emergency care is required as a result of drug therapy;
  4. Recognizing accepted prescribing limits and reporting deviations to the prescribing individual;
  5. Recognizing drug incompatibilities and reporting interactions or potential interactions to the prescribing individual; and
  6. Instructing an individual regarding medications;
- d) The supervision, teaching of, and delegation to other personnel in the performance of activities relating to nursing care.
- e) The performance of other nursing acts which are authorized or limited by the board, and which are consistent either with American Nurses' Association Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of registered nurses.

KRS 314.011(10) defines "licensed practical nursing practice" as:

...The performance of acts requiring knowledge and skill such as are taught or acquired in approved schools for practical nursing in:

- a) The observing and caring for the ill, injured, or infirm under the direction of a registered nurse, advanced practice registered nurse, physician assistant, a licensed physician, or dentist.
- b) The giving of counsel and applying procedures to safeguard life and health, as defined and authorized by the board.

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<sup>2</sup> A copy of the *Kentucky Nursing Laws* may be downloaded from the Kentucky Board of Nursing website at <http://kbn.ky.gov>.

- c) The administration of medication or treatment as authorized by a physician, physician assistant, dentist, or advanced practice registered nurse and as further authorized or limited by the board which is consistent with the National Federation of Licensed Practical Nurses or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of licensed practical nurses.
- d) Teaching, supervising, and delegating except as limited by the board.
- e) The performance of other nursing acts which are authorized or limited by the board and which are consistent with the National Federation of [Licensed] Practical Nurses' Standards of Practice or with Standards of Practice established by nationally accepted organizations of licensed practical nurses.

KRS 314.011(13) defines "nursing assistance" as:

... The performance of delegated nursing acts by unlicensed nursing personnel for compensation under supervision of a nurse.

KRS 314.011(2) defines "delegation" as:

... Directing a competent person to perform a selected nursing activity or task in a selected situation under the nurse's supervision and pursuant to administrative regulations promulgated by the board in accordance with the provisions of KRS Chapter 13A.

201 KAR 20:400 governs delegation of nursing tasks to unlicensed persons.

201 KAR 20:490 governs the scope of practice of the Licensed Practical Nurse in infusion therapy.